



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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The catch of lobsters on the coast of Maine last year was the largest in more than 50 years and brought lobster fishermen probably their highest income in history, according to figures released today by the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries.

Estimates of the year's catch indicated that total production of Maine lobsters was about 14,500,000 pounds, for which fishermen received a record average price of 28 cents per pound. The 1944 catch is the largest since 1892, when 17,600,000 pounds were taken.

Production in the Maine fishery, which yields about three-fourths of the U.S. lobster catch, declined steadily between 1890 and 1920 but has shown a general upward trend since 1933 and sharp increases during the past two years. The 1943 catch was 11,500,000 pounds compared with an average production of about 8,000,000 pounds during the past decade.

The large recent catches have been made in spite of such wartime handicaps as shortages of fishermen and gear, suggesting that lobsters are becoming more abundant in Maine waters. Although reasons for the apparent increase in abundance are not definitely known, contributing causes may be a recently enacted State law prohibiting the capture of small lobsters, and the planting of approximately 200,000 young lobsters annually since 1938 as a cooperative enterprise of the State and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, since lobsters grow slowly, the young planted in 1938 would have reached commercial size only this year.

In returns to fishermen, the lobster fishery is the most valuable seafood industry in the State of Maine, and one of the most valuable in New England. Lobsters once were plentiful throughout the North Atlantic area, but are now scarce in most sections of the coast. About two million pounds are caught in Massachusetts and less than half a million pounds each in New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Connecticut.